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UNCLAS YEREVAN 000692

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SUBJECT: ARMENIA RATIFIES INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

1. Armenia has ratified three international instruments on the protection and promotion of children's rights this year. On February 28 the National Assembly ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography. On March 21 the National Assembly ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the following day (March 22) ratified the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor. Armenian President Kocharian signed these documents on March 19 and April 13, thereby finalizing the ratification process. The GOAM now has twelve months in order to review its legislation and bring it into correspondence with these documents.

2. There has been considerable coverage in the press and from international organizations regarding the ratification of these documents. UNICEF praised the GOAM's efforts to protect children's right during a press conference earlier this month. Sheldon Yett, the UNICEF representative in Armenia, expressed his opinion that the ratification of these international instruments was a key step in ensuring a "protective environment" for Armenia's children. UNICEF has also commented that the new Armenian Labor Code, adopted in November 2004, is already generally consistent with the ILO Convention 182 and other international instruments regulating child labor. Post has continuously raised the importance of these conventions in fighting trafficking and protecting the children's rights at meetings with GOAM officials.

EVANS